



Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff

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NEWS RELEASE

David A. Clarke Jr.
Sheriff

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office 4th of July Drunk Driving Initiative Strengthened by Current Law Change

Milwaukee, WI – Milwaukee County Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. reminds motorists to drive safely during this 4th of July holiday weekend. In Wisconsin, approximately 695,000 people will travel by car over this busy holiday weekend according to AAA. Sheriff Clarke has ordered the deployment of the Sheriff's Office OWI Task Force from 8PM Friday to 4AM Tuesday. This initiative is strengthened by the new change in law for Operating While Intoxicated (OWI), **effective tomorrow – Thursday, July 1, 2010.**

This year, Sheriff's deputies have arrested **771** impaired drivers. Of the 771 impaired drivers, **14** were arrested for their fourth OWI offense. Under the new law, a fourth OWI conviction now constitutes a Class H felony instead of a misdemeanor. The Sheriff's Office 4th of July Drunk Driving Initiative will focus on removing drunk drivers from the Milwaukee County freeway system.

Some important changes in the OWI law:

- **First OWI Offense:** A person convicted of a first OWI offense who had a passenger under the age of sixteen in the car faces a fine of \$350-\$1100 or five days to six months in jail. If a first time OWI offender has a blood alcohol level of greater than 0.15 or greater, the court will order an interlock ignition device be installed on every vehicle owned by the offender.
- **Second OWI Offense:** No changes. A person convicted of a second OWI offense faces a fine between \$350-\$1100 or five days to six months in jail.
- **Third OWI Offense:** If a person is convicted of a third OWI offense, the offender will receive a minimum of 45 days in prison. The minimum sentence prior to this law change was 30 days.
- **Fourth OWI Offense:** If a person is convicted of a fourth OWI offense within five years, the offender now faces a class H felony. The penalty is a fine between \$600 and \$10,000, and possible imprisonment between six months to six years and no option for house arrest. Prior to this law change, a fourth OWI offense was a misdemeanor.
- **Fifth and Sixth OWI Offense:** No changes. Class H felony.
- **Seventh, Eighth, or Ninth Offense:** If a person is convicted of a seventh, eighth, or ninth offense, the offender will serve a mandatory minimum prison term of three years.
- **Tenth Offense:** If a person convicted of a tenth OWI offense, the offender will serve a mandatory minimum prison term of four years.
- **Repeat OWI Offender Causing Injury:** An OWI offender causing injury who has a prior OWI conviction will now face a Class H felony. The penalty is a fine between \$600 - \$10,000, plus six months to six years imprisonment.

*Media interviews are available by appointment
Please contact Captain Aisha Barkow at 414.278.5226 to schedule a time.*

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